Driest March for years

Description

March has been a very dry month in many parts of the UK.

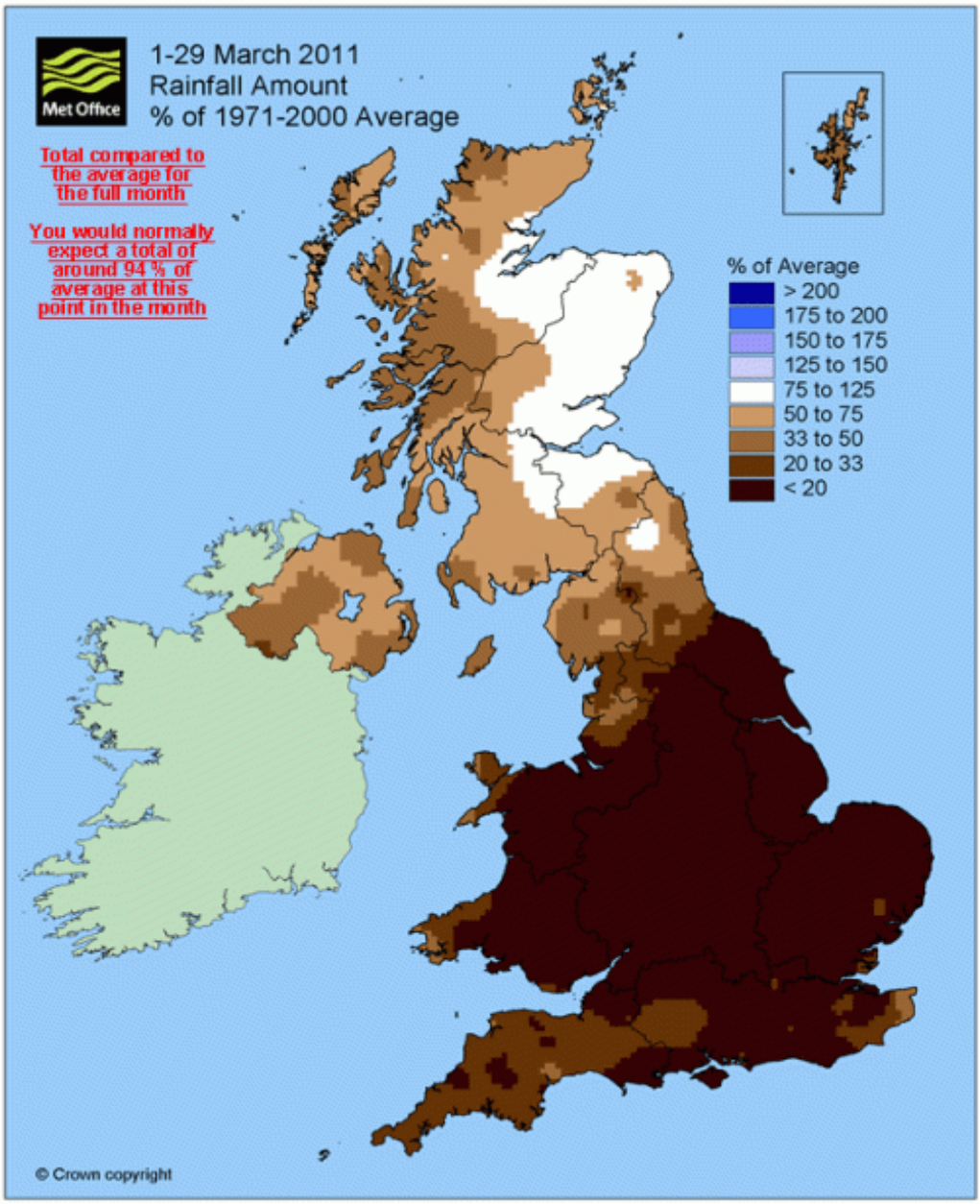
Provisional Met Office rainfall figures for March indicate that the month is likely to be one of the driest on record, even with rain falling over recent days.

The UK average rainfall total from 1 to 29 March was 39.1 mm – 41% of the long-term average for the whole of the month which is 95.9 mm.

This provisional figure makes it the driest March since 1953 when 41.6 mm of rain was recorded. However, this month’s figure will increase following the rain which has fallen over the last few days.

England and Wales were particularly dry, with provisional figures suggesting the month could be amongst the driest in the past 100 years.

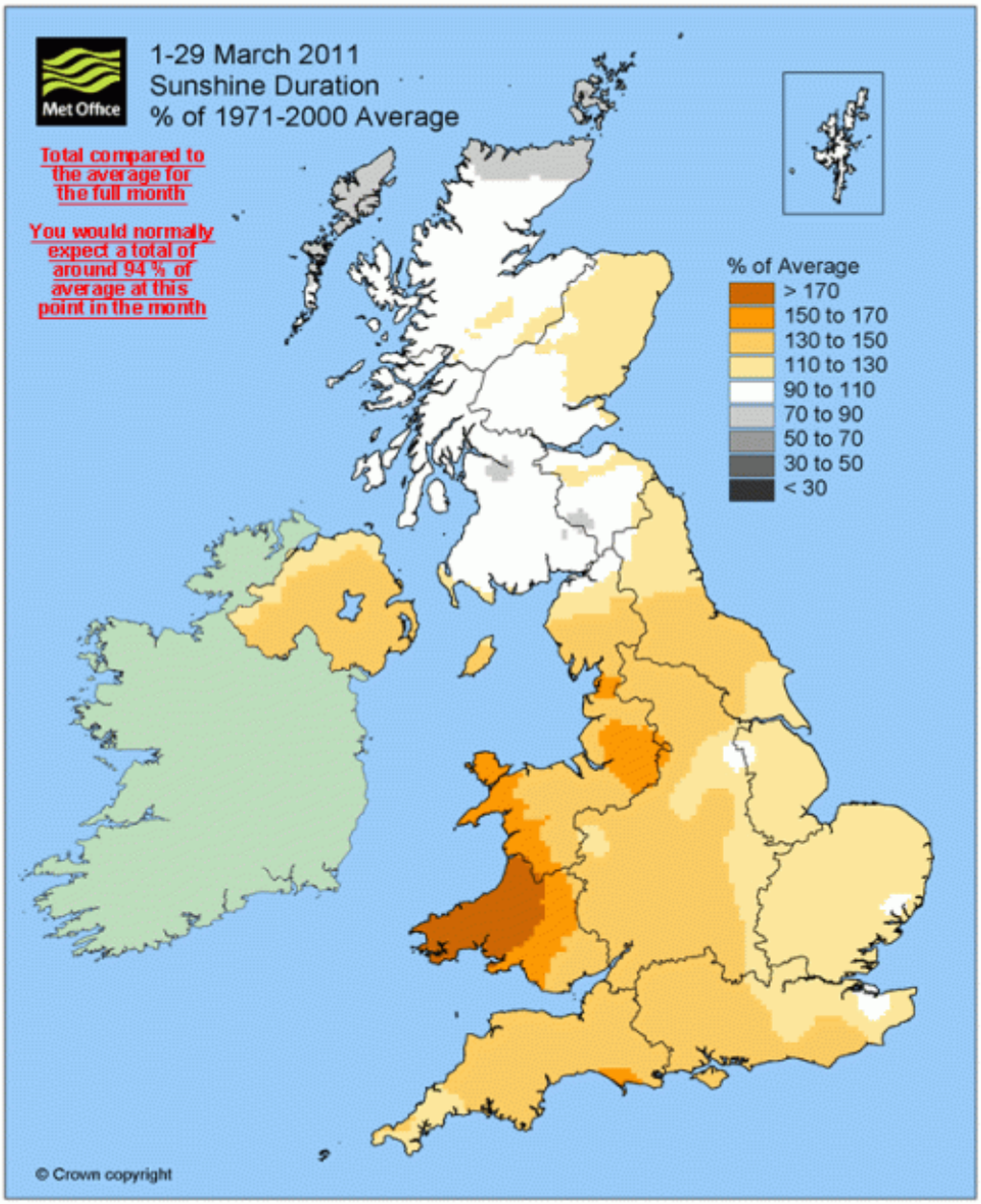
Although Northern Ireland and Scotland have been drier than average, provisional figures show the two nations less dry during the month.


1-29 March 2011
Rainfall Amount
% of 1971-2000 Average
Met Office
Total compared to the average for the full month
You would normally expect a total of around 94 % of average at this point in the month
% of Average
> 200
175 to 200
150 to 175
125 to 150
75 to 125
50 to 75
33 to 50
20 to 33
< 20
© Crown copyright

Map showing rainfall from 1 to 29 March as a % of the 1971-2000 long term average

Many regions within the UK are expected to have had one of their driest March months for a century but with further rainfall being added to monthly totals, this remains unconfirmed.

Meanwhile, despite sunshine amounts being above average across much of the UK this month, provisional figures show that March 2009 was sunnier and follows a spell of sunny March months over recent years.


1-29 March 2011
Sunshine Duration
% of 1971-2000 Average
Met Office
Total compared to the average for the full month
You would normally expect a total of around 94 % of average at this point in the month
% of Average
> 170
150 to 170
130 to 150
110 to 130
90 to 110
70 to 90
50 to 70
30 to 50
< 30
© Crown copyright

Map showing sunshine duration from 1 to 29 March as a % of the 1971-2000 long term average

Provisional figures for the whole month will be available next week.

Date Created
March 2011

Met Office launches changes to the National Severe Weather Warning Service

Description

The Met Office has launched improvements to the National Severe Weather Warning Service that will bring clearer, more targeted warnings based on the likely impacts that severe weather can bring.

The new *Alerts* and *Warnings*, issued by the Met Office National Severe Weather Warning Service will:

- Be easier to understand – using clear language, making the information less technical.
- Be impact based – warnings will be based on the impacts of expected weather conditions in the area likely to be affected.
- Use consistent language – The use of *Alerts* and *Warnings* is consistent with that used by other organisations such as in SEPA and EA flood warnings.
- Improve the display of information – using clear, concise and distinct graphics on the Met Office website.

Patricia Boyle, Public Weather Service Manager at the Met Office said: “Severe weather can have differing impacts depending on time and location. For example heavy rain in one part of the country may have a greater impact than in another or severe gales may have a greater impact in autumn than in winter.

“Taking this information into account should lead to fewer weather warnings being issued whilst making them more relevant to the public and emergency services.”

Finally, the Met Office will be changing the way warnings are displayed on its website to make it easier to find the information that is relevant to users’ particular needs. Users will be able to see at a glance the basic information they are interested in and then, if they wish, drill down to find more detail.

These latest improvements follow an extensive 18 month consultation with local councils, police and fire services as well as the public. It is hoped they will lead to a greater awareness of severe weather and its potential impacts, helping the public to be prepared and take action if necessary.

Nick Baldwin, Chairman of the Public Weather Service Customer Group said: “The Met Office provides extremely accurate short-term forecasts and warnings, and the Met Office’s severe weather warnings are highly trusted by the British people.

“Research from the Met Office has shown that during the snow in December last year, 80% of people surveyed said they were aware of the warning and 95% of those found the warning useful.”

The improvements will continue to deliver critical, safety of life information to those that need to know it, when they need to know it; keeping the public and emergency services informed of high impact weather so that they can take action to keep safe and well.

Find out more about the new National Severe Weather Warning Service

Date Created

March 2011

Met Office in the Media: 29 March 2011

Description

Richard Littlejohn in his Daily Mail column has inaccurately reported that a forecast for the coming summer was provided by the Met Office. This is not the case – The Met Office has not provided seasonal forecasts for over a year as was indeed correctly reported in the same paper yesterday. The forecast the Richard Littlejohn was commenting on was provided by Positive Weather Solutions. This has now been corrected in the online version of the column.

Commercial Insurance News have reported on the launch of the Scottish Flood Forecasting Service, a new initiative between the Met Office, the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency and the Scottish Government. The new service aims to help residents and businesses across Scotland avoid making insurance claims following such disasters. Through the service, businesses in areas vulnerable to flooding can be given advanced warning of any potential risks.
Phil Evans, director of government services at the Met Office said: “This partnership between SEPA and the Met Office, supported by the Scottish government, will enhance flood resilience in Scotland. The Met Office and our weather forecasting team at Aberdeen are delighted to be supporting this new service.”

Farmers Weekly reports on how dry it has been through the first 3 weeks of March. Figures from the Met Office show that from 1 to 22 March, 13mm of rain fell in England and Wales – about 18% of usual the monthly average. However the weather is now turning more unsettled across many parts of the UK which will add to the UK rainfall totals. Despite this welcome rain for many, it is very unlikely that we will see amounts pick up to reach normal.

Related Articles

- First flood forecast test for Scotland (metofficenews.wordpress.com)

Date Created
March 2011

Met Office in the Media: 28 March 2011

Description

A summer of ‘brolly and sunblock’?

Many newspapers today have reported on a forecast of ‘brolly and sunblock’ for the coming summer. This forecast comes from a private weather forecasting company called Positive Weather Solutions, and is not a forecast from the Met Office as is being suggested by some commentators.

The Met Office stopped doing seasonal forecasts more than a year ago, following customer research. This research told us that the public would like a monthly outlook, instead of the longer seasonal forecast, that can not provide the information that they were looking for. We therefore decided to stop issuing a UK ‘seasonal forecast’ four times a year. Instead, we now publish a monthly outlook, updated on a weekly basis.

Although the limitations in science mean monthly forecasts are themselves a developing area of forecasting and will therefore be less precise than our short-term forecasts, the public told us that a monthly outlook would be of use to them.

We take seriously our responsibility to provide the best possible service to the public. Although long range forecasts are vital in some parts of the world, and can be useful for some specialists, such as insurers and energy traders, we know that they are of limited use to the public – for example they are not something that could be used to provide detailed forecasts for Glastonbury or Wimbledon as is being suggested in the media.

BBC Weather Test

Roger Harrabin reported on the BBC Radio Four Today Programme this morning (Weather Test prepares for take-off) of his progress with the BBC Weather Test, that is looking to compare different weather forecasters. This evening he is hosting a public meeting at the Royal Institution where he will publish the draft protocol on which the assessment of forecasts will be based. We remain committed to taking part in this project, but or involvement is dependent on the publication of a protocol that ensures that the methodology, data collection and comparison is undertaken in a way that is scientifically credible, repeatable and verifies publicly avaialable forecasts that we provide.

Related Articles

- Britain set for ‘brolly and sunblock’ summer (telegraph.co.uk)
- Weather forecasters predict heavy rain, thunderstorms and flash-flooding in June (dailymail.co.uk)
- That¿s guaranteed to take the sizzle out of summer… we can expect heavy rain, thunderstorms and flash-flooding in June (dailymail.co.uk)

Date Created
March 2011

Flying laboratory that brings better forecasts

Description

The Express and Echo has run a feature article exploring the work of the Facility for Airborne Atmospheric Measurements (FAAM), jointly run and funded by the Met Office and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC).

The aircraft, a BAe146 four-engine jet, is currently based at Exeter International airport, conducting weather research into stratocumulus clouds.

The aircraft has been flying from Exeter on the Combined Observations of the Atmospheric Boundary Layer to study the Evolution of StratoCumulus (COALESC) campaign – a month-long campaign to study stratocumulus clouds. These boring looking, low layered clouds may only be a few hundred metres thick but they make a big difference between us having a nice, sunny spring day and a dull and dreary day. The COALESC campaign aims to monitor the evolution of stratocumulus cloud layers.

Met Office/NERC FAAM Aircraft

Image not found or type unknown

The FAAM aircraft has been operating in tandem with ground based observations being taken by the Met Research Unit at Cardington (Bedford). They have set up observing sites at Weybourne, on the north Norfolk coast, Denver Sluice, near Downham Market, Norfolk, and at Cardington itself. These sites have been monitoring how the clouds develop as they move in from the North Sea on north-easterly winds.

The aircraft has been gathering vital data to help us understand how these clouds form and change during the day – data that will be used to further develop the Met Office’s computer models to provide even more accurate forecasts in the future. The BAe146 is also equipped with instruments identical to those on weather satellites.

Satellite data are of critical importance to the Met Office, allowing us to observe the current state of the atmosphere and use this information as the basis of our forecasts for the next few days. The aircraft instruments are used to allow us to develop new methods to use the satellite data. So next time you

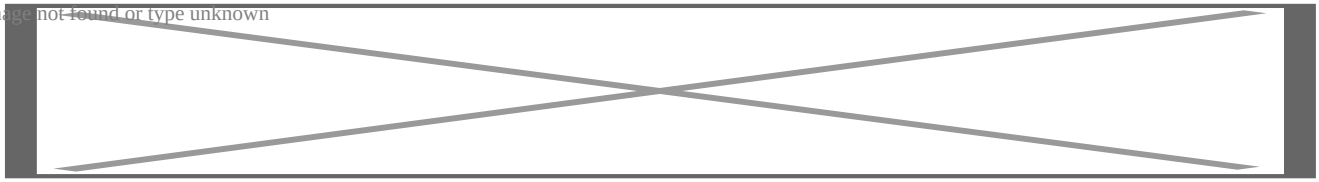
watch, listen to or read your local weather bulletin, spare a thought for the scientists who take to the skies.

With its BAe146 – one of the best-equipped research aircraft in the world – FAAM is broadening the horizon of modern weather forecasting. The full article ‘Flying laboratory that brings better forecasts‘ is available on the thisisexeter website.

Date Created
March 2011

Met Office supports Climate Week

Description

Image not found or type unknown 

The Met Office is supporting Climate Week, acting as the lead science adviser and providing clear guidance on the results from research and studies undertaken by our climate science experts.

Among this work is the compelling evidence of rising global temperature published in 2010 by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration in the US in its annual `State of the Climate´ report.

In the report, Met Office scientists collated a range of different measurements that demonstrate unmistakable signs of a warming world. Measurements show things such as air temperature, sea-surface temperature, sea level, humidity and higher-level tropospheric temperature are all rising. Others such as Arctic sea ice, glaciers and spring snow cover in the northern hemisphere are declining. It is this detailed level of science that the Met Office routinely provides to advise on climate across government and throughout industry and commerce.

Professor Julia Slingo, Met Office Chief Scientist, said: “Whenever we talk about climate change it’s important we do so with a proper understanding of the science. For example, when we look at air temperature and other indicators of climate, we see highs and lows in the data from year-to-year because of natural variability. Understanding climate change requires looking at the longer-term record. When we follow decade-to-decade trends using different data sets and independent analyses from around the world, we see clear and unmistakable signs of a warming world.

“That is why I am very pleased for the Met Office to be associated with Climate Week. We hope our science will help people understand what our climate is and how it works.”

As part of our association with Climate Week, Met Office scientists will be on hand at the launch to answer questions on aspects of climate science and to judge a schools competition. This supports the role the Met Office is playing in increasing peoples understanding of climate science with other initiatives including providing science content and videos to the climate week website and through the OPAL climate survey and online question post box as well.

Kevin Steele, founder of Climate Week, said: “The Met Office is a household name known and trusted by millions of people across Britain, as well as being one of the country´s leading scientific organisations. It is tremendous to have it contributing its scientific expertise to the Climate Week campaign”

Date Created
March 2011

Japan earthquake and the UK Met Office role

Description

Following the earthquake in Japan on Friday 11 March 2011, here is summary to clarify the roles and responsibilities of organisations around the world:

- The Japan Meteorological Agency has responsibility for Japanese earthquakes, tsunami, nuclear and volcanic ash warnings.
- For more information about earthquakes please refer to the Japan Meteorological Agency website http://www.jma.go.jp/jma/indexe.html or the British Geological Survey at http://www.bgs.ac.uk/
- The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) maintains a system of Regional Specialised Meteorological Centres (RSMCs) which, when requested, run their dispersion models in accordance with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and WMO Procedures. Under this system the IAEA http://www.iaea.org/ is the lead authority in declaring the current activity as a radioactive release incident. Tokyo RSMC (Japan Meteorological Agency http://www.jma.go.jp/jma/indexe.html), Beijing RSMC (China) and Obninsk RSMC (Russia) are the joint leads and authoritative sources for this event.
- The Met Office both as an RSMC (Exeter RSMC) and as a World Area Forecast Centre has not issued any warnings regarding the incident in Japan although it does have ICAO responsibilities to keep the aviation industry informed that an incident is occurring.

Date Created
March 2011

Six Nations weekend brings high hopes for all

Description

As we head toward another Six Nations weekend all eyes will be on Stadio Flaminio, the Millennium Stadium and especially Twickenham, as Scotland try to take back the Calcutta Cup, from a so far unbeaten England side.

But what effect will the weather play in the matches taking place this weekend and can the weather really make a difference. In our video Twickenham stadium director Richard Knight talks about how weather can affect the stadium and the rugby matches.

Finally you can get forecasts for all the matches taking place this weekend on our Six Nations event pages.

Date Created
March 2011

Winter returns to northern Britain

Description

Our forecasters are predicting the return of snow to parts of northern Britain for the weekend, bringing the risk of some travel disruption.

Rain is expected to turn to snow over parts of Northern Ireland, northern England and southern Scotland overnight into Saturday, before spreading north across the central belt of Scotland during the day.

Met Office Chief Forecaster, Tony Waters said: “The heaviest snowfall on Friday night and Saturday is expected over the higher ground of southern and central Scotland, where a covering of up to 30 cm is possible by the end of Saturday. At lower levels the snow is likely to be slushy on main routes but we could still see 5 to 10 cm of snow by the end of the day.”

The snow is expected to move north to affect parts of the Highlands and Grampians during Sunday, with the potential for blizzard conditions and significant drifting likely on the mountains.

Tony Waters continued: “If you are heading into the mountains this weekend please keep up to date with the latest Met Office mountain area forecasts”

Latest weather forecasts and warnings

How to interpret Met Office Severe Weather Warnings

For travel advice you can visit:

Highways Agency

Traffic Scotland

Trafficwatch Northern Ireland

Date Created
March 2011

Japan Earthquake

Description

An earthquake with a magnitude of 8.9 struck 250 miles (400km) from Tokyo on 11 March. Following the earthquake there continues to be a risk of aftershocks and tsunamis throughout Japan. Tsunami warnings have been put in place around the Pacific Ocean

Further information is available from the Japanese Meteorological Agency, the British Geological Survey and the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre. If you are concerned about a friend or relative that may have been affected by the earthquake, please refer to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website.

Date Created
March 2011

Climate Change Guide: What is Climate?

Description

To understand climate change, it's important to recognise the difference between weather and climate. The video below explains what our climate is and how this relates to climate change.

You can find out more information on climate and climate change in our website guide.

Date Created
March 2011

Bang Goes the Winter Weather

Description

Image via Wikipedia

A special hour-long edition of Bang Goes the Theory, exploring winter weather will be broadcast on BBC One at 8pm this evening.

The Met Office provided science advice and guidance as well as facts and figures about the weather over the past few winters to the producers of the programme.

The BBC says: “This special sees the team set up camp in their very own weather workshop. Their mission is to get under the bonnet of our winter weather and explain it as never before. Dallas, Liz and Jem find out first-hand what it feels like to stand in one of our worst British rain storms and to have a blizzard smack you right in the face, as they challenge their ingenious weather chamber to recreate the conditions of two recent big storms in order to really experience how much of a punch those weather events packed. And in a genuine Bang first, they attempt to make cloud, rain and snow in the studio and from scratch.”

The programme is now available to watch on BBC iPlayer and is available until Thursday 17th March.

Date Created
March 2011

Met Office in the Media: 09 March 2011

Description

On Tuesday BAA provided evidence to the transport committee on the winter weather, in which BAA, Heathrow's owner, told MPs its winter weather plan was overwhelmed when at least 9cm reports the Guardian and the Daily Telegraph.

News coverage widely focused on suggestions that operators planned for the wrong amount of snow focusing on winter resilience plans that focused on falls of 6cm of snow.

The Met Office provided good advice throughout the winter, with forecasts for the day in question highlighting the risk of between 10-15cms of snow.

Date Created
March 2011

Why our obsession with the weather could help save the planet

Description

The Met Office has been working on behalf of Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) at the Natural History Museum to encourage learning about weather and climate change. The

As part of OPAL the Met Office is coordinating a climate survey, an exciting national experiment that allows you to explore your local climate by conducting a number of experiments such as blowing bubbles to monitor local wind patterns, observe aeroplane trails, or contrails and finally record how hot or cold they feel as part of efforts to see how people might cope with temperature changes.

The Met Office is also been asked by OPAL to answer your questions about climate change. Most people have questions about climate change, and the Met Office, as experts in weather and climate science will take your questions and provide you with the answers you need to make sense of climate science.

- Met Office urges public to blow bubbles and count vapour trails to monitor climate (telegraph.co.uk)
- Met Office climate survey: why our obsession with the weather could help save the planet (telegraph.co.uk)
- Plane spotters and bubble blowers wanted for climate survey (guardian.co.uk)
- Met Office becomes lead scientific adviser to Climate Week (metofficenews.wordpress.com)
- Met Office climate survey: how to get involved (telegraph.co.uk)

Date Created
March 2011

Spring has sprung (at least for meteorologists)

Description

Meteorology for the Northern hemisphere spring...

Image not found or type unknown
Meteorology for the Northern hemisphere spring begins on 1 March

By the beginning of March, the longest winter nights have passed in the northern hemisphere for another year as the day length increases ahead of the equinox later in the month. Meteorologically, spring begins on 1st March and ends on 31st May, which is for statistical purposes and historical records. For many people the season changeover is when the oscillating date of the spring equinox occurs, which this year is 20th March. Although spring can be determined by calendar dates, the natural variability within the atmosphere means that, as far as the weather is concerned, year to year differences vary widely. These changeable weather patterns can have big impacts on how flora and fauna respond through the season. John Hammond, a forecaster at the Met Office explains more on the BBC blog 23 degrees.

More details and provisional statistics on the Winter of 2010/11 will be available in the next day or so once all the data has been collected and compiled.

Date Created
March 2011